



State of Louisiana  
**Animal Welfare Commission**

*Office of the Governor*

---

3101 W. Napoleon Avenue, Suite 102, Metairie, LA 70001

(504) 219-4593

**Report submitted to: Jefferson Parish Animal Control Officials and Jefferson Parish Government**

**Date of Report: September 22, 2009**

Representatives of the Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH), Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section, recently completed an audit of your shelter facilities located in Jefferson and Marrero, Louisiana. The Louisiana Animal Welfare Commission (LAWC) is very grateful for your cooperation in the audit. The goal of this audit is to assist local and parish governing agencies in evaluating shelter facilities and planning improvements. Please accept the following comments in the constructive manner in which they are intended.

The Jefferson Parish animal shelters provided OPH personnel ready access to animal and personnel records. The shelter staff was very accommodating and shared information freely. Hours of operation and emergency contact information are displayed at the entrance to both shelters. Evidence of adequate record keeping was observed by inspectors. The shelter provides services to the citizens of Jefferson Parish during regularly scheduled business hours. Fees are registered with the parish and are included in parish ordinances. The local animal ordinances include minimum sanitary standards, although not identical to suggestions in the Louisiana Revised Statutes, for the shelter. A private company provides the shelter with a regular program of pest and rodent control. Veterinary care is provided by two full-time veterinarians, one employed at each of the two facilities. Vaccine, parasite control and spay/neuter policies exceed accepted standards in Louisiana and shelter personnel demonstrate a basic knowledge of infection control when queried by OPH inspectors. All cats leaving the shelter must be contained in a cat box or carrier, a policy which prevents inadvertent escape and protects adopting persons from injury through improper restraint of often anxious felines.

The use of the commercial misting system, the type used on football sidelines in warm weather, is an innovative and effective way to decrease the ambient temperature and increase the comfort of animals in non air conditioned areas.

Food is stored in an organized and safe manner, one that permits rotation of products and protection of food from spoilage and infestation by vermin. Primary animal enclosures appear to be well maintained and in most instances are in a satisfactory state of repair. Sanitation methods also appear to be compliant with acceptable methods of shelter hygiene.

Both shelters maintain a separate room and table for euthanasia procedures and all euthanasia is performed by certified animal euthanasia technicians. Lethal injection, the preferred method of euthanasia in most pet species, is the exclusive method of euthanasia employed at both shelters.

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

Although near capacity, the shelter population is maintained in caging that does not show indications of overcrowding. Cats are screened for disease, vaccinated and dewormed prior to admission to multiple cat housing.

LAWC is aware of the alleged incidents at the shelter in August, 2009. LAWC was able to review two reports summarizing the aforementioned events, an internal review by Jefferson Parish Homeland Security and a Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty audit. This report does not address the findings of these investigations, but does address apparent improvements made in response to suggestions gleaned from both reports. Record keeping at present appears to comply with state standards. Records are maintained on each individual animal. A computer record keeping system is currently being deployed at both shelters. Although no formal inspection process presently exists, shelter management is developing a system of review. The exact method of routine shelter oversight has not been finalized, but evidence of planning was presented to OPH inspectors.

The shelter has put in place a written "two-tiered" procedure for approval of euthanasia, whereby the decision to euthanize animals must be approved and attested to by a combination of two of the following personnel: kennel master, shelter manager, animal control officer, or veterinarian. The approving personnel must both sign the euthanasia form before the procedure can be carried out. Written authorization giving evidence of multiple levels of approval of euthanasia is desirable.

An in-house system of training for employees is also being developed. The shelter has already conducted a program in customer satisfaction for all shelter employees. The shelter has scheduled employees to receive training within the next six months from the ASPCA in animal diseases and injury.

I. The following suggestions are made based on the state statute (R.S. 3:2461, et seq.) listing minimum standards that may be adopted by parish governing authorities:

1. Shelter standards: As stated previously, standards applying to the shelter are included in local ordinances. Parish officials should investigate the benefit of strengthening the standards and including all or most of the provisions in the state's Revised Statutes.

2. Adequate local supervision: Louisiana law states that "shelters should be inspected at least once every six months by an authorized representative of the parish to determine compliance with the requirements" set forth in state statutes. Although the supervisory structure of the shelter was thoroughly explained to the auditors, a formal inspection program has not been finalized. LAWC suggests that the parish quickly establish a regular program of inspection and document the results for later examination by OPH auditors. This system of inspection should be recorded in a written policy. It was noted by OPH inspectors that the shelter does consult with OPH Environmental Services on issues of sanitation and that the shelter has been inspected in the past by the Director of the Parish Office of Homeland Security.

3. Food storage: Louisiana law states that "Supplies of food and bedding shall be stored in facilities which adequately protect such supplies against infestation or contamination by vermin." The food is stored properly, however a major problem with flies was observed in and near the food storage area in the west bank facility. LAWC recommends consultation with the contracted pest control provider on suggestions to control or mitigate the problem. Perhaps screening or other structural improvements could be added to the present facility to reduce exposure of food to insects. Cleaning supplies were also observed to be stored with food. It is recommended that food products and cleaning supplies be separated. This can be accomplished by restructuring the storage plan so that cleaning supplies are kept

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

in a separate area of the facility, or by confining cleaning supply storage to an opposite end of the storage room and placing signs in the room identifying the cleaning supply storage area. Of course cleaning supplies should never be stored above food of any type.

In the west bank facility, rodent droppings were noted in the "food pantry" area. The shelter contracts for pest control, however no evidence of a specific rodent control strategy was observed. To fulfill statutory requirements for control of vermin, LAWC reminds the management of the importance of rodent control in any facility that is utilized for the storage of food. Of course the strategy employed for rodent control should be of a type that precludes accidental consumption of rodenticides by any resident or other non-target animal in or around the facility.

4. Parasite control: Louisiana law states, "Each animal shall be observed daily for sickness, disease, injury, abnormal behavior, external parasites, or lameness by the animal caretaker in charge, or by someone under his direct supervision." Fleas and ticks can be debilitating parasites and can serve as vectors for diseases. Employees indicated that the west bank shelter is presently experiencing a problem with a tick infestation. Inspectors were also informed that similar problems have been observed in the past in the east bank facility. Corrective actions are being taken in the west bank facility to eliminate the problem. The shelter also has initiated a program of administration of flea and tick preventatives to resident animals. LAWC recognizes that entry of fleas and ticks into a facility can be difficult to completely prevent. Isolation of intake animals to a screening or quarantine area that is routinely treated for flea and tick infestation prior to admission to the general shelter population, and training of shelter staff to recognize and treat external parasite infestations on incoming animals, are methods that may be used to control the problem in the future.

5. Ventilation: Louisiana law states that "...facilities for dogs and cats shall be adequately ventilated to provide for the health and comfort of the animals at all times. Such facilities shall be provided with fresh air by means of windows, doors, vents, or air conditioning and shall be ventilated so as to minimize drafts, odors, and moisture condensation." At the west bank facility, the communal cat rooms are poorly ventilated, lacking input of fresh air. The lack of ventilation exacerbates the odor in the rooms. LAWC recommends that ventilation to the rooms be improved, either through installation of additional air ducts to improve flow or screened entries that permit ventilation from the hallway.

6. Waste disposal: Louisiana law states, "Disposal facilities shall be so provided and operated to minimize vermin infestations, odors and disease hazards." The general plan of waste disposal at the facility is excellent. In runs, waste from dogs is hosed down to a gravitational trough or drain sewage disposal system. This eventually makes its way to the parish sewer system. Litter from cats is placed in garbage containers in the wards. The garbage in the plastic containers is removed in plastic liners and is placed in sealed liners, within a dumpster. The dumpster is regularly emptied and contents are disposed of properly. Ward receptacles consist of large plastic garbage barrels with plastic liners. All garbage receptacles should be equipped with plastic lids. Shelter employees should be reminded to keep garbage containers covered with plastic lids when not in use.

7. Training: Louisiana law states that "shelter personnel should be trained as to animal health, disease control, humane care and treatment, animal control and transportation of animals," and that shelter workers "shall be able to identify and understand the principal animal diseases and injuries..." LAWC recommends that the training program established at the facility encompass all disciplines stipulated in the state statute. Several public entities are available to provide assistance in training. The shelter is free to contact LAWC for referrals and further information.

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

8. Enclosure safety and security: The Louisiana Revised Statutes state, "Housing facilities for dogs and cats shall be structurally sound and shall be maintained in good repair, to protect the animal from injury, to contain animals, and to restrict the entrance of other animals." Cat and small animal intake and isolation (screening) areas at both facilities are maintained in converted garages. Both of these areas open directly to the outside and no secondary containment to prevent escape of animals is evident. Doors are often left open to maintain tolerable temperature and ventilation. The shelter might consider structural changes, such as large doors with small gauge wiring or screening, that would enhance security and maintain ventilation, or installation of cooling systems that would eliminate the need for open entryways. These precautions lessen the likelihood of escape and also serve as additional barriers to entry of unwanted pests. Employees should be encouraged to close and secure all external passageways in both facilities.

In the cat and small animal receiving area on the west bank, paper ceiling material is applied over insulation. The ceiling in this area is sagging in several spots. High humidity in the area and the use of large quantities of water for cleaning render this type of ceiling inappropriate. The ceiling should be replaced. The walls of the room are poorly constructed with several holes in fiberglass walls. Much of the structure is damaged. The walls of this room should also be repaired.

Ceiling tiles are missing in several rooms in both facilities. The area above the tiles may be an area where cats might find cover if inadvertently freed from caged areas. It is often difficult to recover these animals; therefore an effort should be made to eliminate the possibility of access.

9. Washrooms and Plumbing: The Louisiana Revised Statutes state, "Facilities such as washrooms, basins, or sinks, shall be provided to maintain cleanliness among animal caretakers." Additional wash basins are desirable in animal wards or animal contact areas. Particularly in the west bank facility, there is a shortage of wash basins in work and animal contact areas. General improvements to the condition of plumbing facilities and in the number of wash basins would increase the ability of employees to practice good hygiene and effective infection control. If these types of improvements are not feasible in the near future, the shelter should consider installation of several hand sanitizer stations throughout all areas of the facility. Signs instructing employees to wash hands after using the restroom before returning to work are helpful in promoting hygiene.

10. Lighting: The Louisiana Revised Statutes state that "indoor housing facilities for dogs and cats shall have ample light, by natural or artificial means, or both, of good quality and well distributed. Such lighting shall provide uniformly distributed illumination of sufficient light intensity to permit routine inspection and cleaning during the entire working period." The inspectors noted that lighting could be improved in some areas of the facility, especially on the west bank. Proper light/dark cycles and subdued lighting are sometimes desired and are beneficial, at times, to the animal's environment. Rheostats can be installed to diminish lighting at desired times, but sufficient cleaning is problematic in inadequate light conditions.

11. Floors: The Louisiana Revised Statutes state that "floors and walls of animal holding areas shall be constructed of smooth, moisture impervious material and shall be accessible for cleaning." The shelter is characterized by concrete and tile floors throughout both facilities. As to be expected some of the concrete floors are cracked. LAWC recommends that the floors be sealed annually to reduce porosity and preserve the surfaces.

There are thick coatings of animal hair on many interior surfaces in the west bank facility. This accumulation may indicate a need for phased closure of individual wards and thorough, focused cleaning

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

and disinfection. There is an accumulation of what appears to be more than a day's accumulation in some of the floor drains. Drains should be thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis.

12. Drainage: A problem with drainage was noted in some areas of the west bank facility, especially the dog housing areas. The Louisiana Revised Statutes state, "A suitable method shall be provided to rapidly eliminate excess water from indoor housing facilities." The pooled water is adequately addressed by the workforce present. However the inspectors observed intensive expense of labor to control the problem. There are also chronic problems with back-up of floor drains, especially when raining. Although resource intensive, correction to drainage and correction of floor depressions could somewhat ameliorate the situation. Until that time, the shelter is encouraged to continue to address the drainage deficiencies to maintain safe and dry floors.

One problem spot in the west bank's outdoor area (where the public is often familiarized with adoptees) is a low spot under a patio table. The depression is sometimes covered in water and should be filled with substrate.

II. Adoption of the following practices should serve to improve the public image of the facility, enhance health and safety of the animals and workers, and/or decrease the likelihood of legal incidents and public complaints.

Suggestions by LAWC to improve shelter management:

1. In the west bank facility, plastic food and water bowls are utilized in several animal cages. These types of containers may be chewed by animals and can deteriorate with time so as not to permit thorough disinfection. LAWC recommends that, if use of plastic bowls is a necessity, the bowls be monitored closely for pitting and damage, and be replaced as necessary. At the time of the inspection, shelter officials indicated that replacement stainless steel bowls were on order and would arrive soon at the shelter.
2. Louisiana's revised statutes state that "dogs shall be separated from cats." This shelter complies with this requirement and these species of animals were never observed to be housed in the same primary enclosure. Additionally, only puppies are housed in wards with cats. To minimize stress to cats and dogs, the staff is encouraged to separate cats and dogs by ward also, possibly keeping the animals in areas with separate ventilation systems; however LAWC recognizes that the construction of the facility may not permit such stringent separation by species.
3. The Jefferson shelters attempt to isolate ill animals that are not euthanized or are in a waiting period before final determination of status. However isolation facilities may be inadequate. The inspectors observed that the cat adoption area doubled as a ringworm isolation area. Even if cages are used to isolate the ringworm positive cats, this may not be effective in preventing transfer to adoptable cats. Cardboard boxes cannot be cleaned adequately and should not be used as platforms or play enclosures for cats. Elevated surfaces should be constructed of impervious materials to facilitate cleaning and hygiene. In the east bank shelter the sick cat and cat recovery ward is also the area containing a washer and dryer for bedding, towels, etc. Storage of bedding and other supplies intended for use in the general population should be in non-residence areas.
4. Freezers that are used for carcass holding also hold frozen water bottles that once were used to cool resident animals during periods of extreme heat. These frozen water bottles should be removed. The

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

shelter's policy is to euthanize diseased animals. Diseased animals certainly are capable of shedding contagious diseases at the time of death. Freezing is not an effective means of disinfecting a carcass. In fact, freezing sometimes preserves pathogens that will later multiply under more appropriate environmental conditions. Therefore no materials or objects that will later contact living animals should be stored in carcass storage freezers. If any frozen item is used at the facility, a separate freezer should be employed.

5. These freezers also feature a dirty slurry of residue inside. The freezers should be cleaned. For reasons stated above, employees can be exposed to contagious pathogens when inserting or removing carcasses and can act to mechanically transfer these pathogens to animals in other sections of the facilities.

6. As mentioned previously, the Jefferson shelters have initiated a formal program of in-house training. LAWC realizes that on the job training is effective, however continuing education for shelter employees is strongly encouraged. Animal control officers at these facilities are listed as part of the approval process for euthanasia of animals. Normally the animal control officer is required to make this decision on initial assessment of animals that have been injured or that are ill. In order to properly carry out this role, training for animal control officers on matters of animal health are imperative.

7. A written plan for supply management and dedicated areas for storage, separate from animal wards, would be helpful. Storage areas in both facilities, especially the west bank facility, were observed to be untidy and haphazardly arranged. Bedding and food/water bowls should be stored in areas away from animal wards to prevent inadvertent soiling or contamination prior to use. Cleaning supplies should not be stored in kennels, unless secured in a cabinet.

8. In the west bank facility the break room for employees is untidy and not adequately cleaned. The refrigerator is not clean and the faucet is not functioning, which is unacceptable for an area intended for human food consumption. Hand washing facilities should be repaired; the refrigerator and the room in general should be cleaned and maintained in a sanitary fashion. The need for a clean break area for employees enhances the image of the shelter and provides a safer environment for workers.

9. This report states repeatedly the importance of written policies for several procedures at public animal shelters. LAWC recommends that management finalize and publish written policies for storage of food and supplies, shelter hygiene, employee training, isolation of animals, euthanasia, feeding, and shelter oversight.

10. The old carbon monoxide (CO) chamber should be removed from the property. The presence of the chamber may give those unfamiliar with the shelter, the impression that use of the chamber is continuing. The unit is large and takes up valuable space.

11. Both of the Jefferson Parish shelters function continuously at or near capacity. The workload observed is extreme and both facilities appear to be significantly understaffed with animal contact personnel. Although volunteers are often employed at the facility, the large number of animals in residence requires a larger staff. It is intuitive to conclude that the cause of many problems at the shelter is understaffing. Additional full-time trained staff would greatly benefit the facility. Additional training for volunteers is also desirable.

12. Facilities at the west bank site are older and are not only filled to capacity with animals, but are also inadequate to function efficiently. This situation is evidenced by the following: the surgery room doubles as an office, the kitten adoption ward functions as a surgery recovery area and provides office space for

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*

the animal control officer, the laundry in both east and west bank kennels is also used to house animals. Increasing capacity in animal treatment, laundry and storage areas is desirable.

This concludes the report. OPH will request the statistics from calendar year 2009 in early January. Please be vigilant for the request.

Shelter management informed the inspectors that the facility on the west bank will be relocated soon. LAWC wished to remind parish officials that the commission is very happy to provide advice and expertise pertaining to shelter design and function.

Thanks again to the Jefferson Parish Animal Shelters for cooperation in this audit. LAWC recognizes the shelters' dedication to humane animal control and animal welfare in Louisiana.

Submitted by: The Louisiana Animal Welfare Commission

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joelle Rupert". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joelle Rupert, Commissioner

*...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals*